HOSEA 7

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Ephraim's Iniquity	Impenitence of Israel and Judah (6:4-7:10)	All Israel has forgotten the Lord and has sought help from other gods and other nations (4:1-8:14)		Disorders in Israel (6:7-7:2)
7:1-7 (1-7)	7:1-3 (1-3)	7:1-7 (6:11b-7:7)	Conspiracy in the Palace	Conspiracy The Order of the Day in Israel
			7:3-6	7:3-7 (3-7)
	7:4-7 (4-7)			
			7:7	
			Israel and the Nations	Israel Ruined by Relying on Foreign Nations
7:8-16 (8-16)	7:8-10 (8-10)	7:8-10 (8-10)	7:8-12	7:8-12 (8-12)
	Futile Reliance on the Nations			
	7:11-12 (11-12)	7:11-13 (11-13)		The Ingratitude and Punishment of Israel
	7:13-16 (13-14a)		7:13-16	7:13-16 (13-16)
	(14b-16)	7:14-16 (14-16)		

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 7:1-7

1When I would heal Israel,
The iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered,
And the evil deeds of Samaria,
For they deal falsely;
The thief enters in,
Bandits raid outside,
2And they do not consider in their hearts
That I remember all their wickedness.
Now their deeds are all around them;
They are before My face.
3With their wickedness they make the king glad,
And the princes with their lies.
4They are all adulterers,
Like an oven heated by the baker
Who ceases to stir up *the fire*
From the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.
5On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine;
He stretched out his hand with scoffers,
6For their hearts are like an oven
***As* they approach their plotting;**
Their anger smolders all night,
In the morning it burns like a flaming fire.
7All of them are hot like an oven,
And they consume their rulers;
All their kings have fallen.
None of them calls on Me.

7:1 "When I would heal Israel" The content of this line of poetry seems to go best paired with the last line of chapter 6 (LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate, NKJV, NASB).

▣ **"heal"** The word "heal" (BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used often by Hosea to describe God's spiritual renewal of His people from the sickness of rebellion (e.g., Hos.

5:13; 6:1; 7:1; 11:3; 14:4). In the OT sin is described as a sickness (e.g., Ps. 103:3; Isa. 1:5-6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEALING

▣ **"iniquity"** Israel's sin is described as "iniquity" (i.e., corruption, Hos. 4:8; 5:5; 8:13; 9:7,9; 10:10; 12:8; 13:12; 14:1-2, BDB 730) and "evil deed" (BDB 949, cf. Hos. 7:2,3; 9:15; 10:15 [twice]).

▣ **"uncovered"** This VERB (BDB 162, KB 191, *Niphal* PERFECT with *waw*) means to reveal by uncovering (e.g., Hos. 2:10; 1 Sam. 2:27; 14:8; Isa. 53:1). It has a sexual aspect in Isa. 57:8, as it does here (i.e., fertility worship).

▣

NASB, NRSV	**"they deal falsely"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"they have committed fraud"**
TEV	**"they cheat"**
NJB	**"for deceit is their principle of behavior"**
REB	**"they have not kept faith"**
JPSOA	**"they have acted treacherously"**
LXX	**"they have performed lies"**

The VERB (lit. "do," "make," "work," BDB 821, KB 950, *Qal* PERFECT) addresses Israel's "deception" and "lies" (BDB 1055, cf. 2 Sam. 15:13; Prov. 11:18; 20:17; Jer. 6:13; 8:8,10).

▣ **"The thief enters in,**
Bandits raid outside" The "enter in" and "on the outside" may be a way of referring to
1. the sin of all the people
2. invasion (e.g., Jer. 18:22) and exile

The "thief" (literally "band" BDB 151 I) was used earlier in Hos. 6:9 (cf. 2 Chr. 25:9,10,13).

▣ **"Israel. . . Ephraim. . .Samaria"** These are three terms used to describe the Northern Ten Tribes after the division of the people of God in 922 B.C. between Jeroboam I, a labor leader from the tribe of Ephraim, and Rehoboam, Solomon's son.

7:2 "I remember all their wickedness. . .They are before My face" This refers to God's documentation of the sins of His covenant people (i.e., the book of deeds). To forgive is to forget (e.g., Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 18:22; 33:16; Micah 7:19), but to remember (cf. Hos. 8:13; 9:9) is the sign of unrepentance ("they do not consider in their hearts") and the consequent judgment that follows (e.g., Jer. 14:10; 44:12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TWO BOOKS, METAPHOR FOR GOD'S MEMORY

▣ **"their deeds are all around them"** This VERB (BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* PERFECT) is used of a military or enemy surrounding someone (e.g., Job 16:13; Ps. 17:11; 88:11). This same term is used again in Hos. 11:12, where Ephraim surrounds God with lies.

7:3 "they" There has been much discussion about who "they" refers to in Hos. 7:3-6. There are two main theories.

1. This refers to political conspirators (cf. Hos. 7:7 and NET Bible) who are somehow related to the bandits and thieves that are mentioned in Hos. 7:1. Openly their loyalty is to the king, but privately they plot his assassination (cf. Hos. 8:4). After the death of Jeroboam II, a rapid succession of six kings occurred (cf. Hos. 7:7):
    a. Zechariah, 746-745 B.C., who was assassinated
    b. Shallum, 745 B.C., who was assassinated

c. Menahem, 745-738 B.C., who was an Assyrian vassal (cf. 2 Kgs. 15:19)
d. Pekahiah, 738-737 B.C., who was assassinated
e. Pekah, 737-732 B.C., who was assassinated
f. Hoshea, 732-724 B.C., who was imprisoned by Assyria (cf. 2 Kgs. 17:4)

2. This refers to priests who have been the object of Hosea's scorn since Hos. 4:4-6,7-10,11-14; 5:1-7. And now they are involved in political unrest. It is possible that these two can be combined. It is the priests who are functioning along with the princes as political conspirators.

7:4 "They are all adulterers" This is either
1. another reference to the fertility worship (literal)
2. a reference to their covenant faithlessness (figurative, cf. Jer. 9:2)
3. should be emended to "bakers" (see NET Bible, p. 1567, #4)

▣ **"Like an oven heated by the baker"** There is an illusion to these political conspirators or priests as being bakers and ovens. The metaphor seems to be
1. that they rise early to plan their treason (cf. Hos. 7:6,7,8b)
2. that they do not pay attention to their task and ruin the bread

7:5 "On the day of our king" This possibly refers to
1. an annual coronation celebration
2. a birthday celebration
3. a special day honoring a military victory

▣ **"the princes"** This could refer to the king's family or to courtiers. They are mentioned often in Hosea (cf. Hos. 7:5,16; 8:4,10; 9:15; 13:10).

▣ **"became sick with the heat of wine"** The political leaders are liars (Hos. 7:3), drunkards (Hos. 7:5), and schemers (Hos. 7:5-7). Drunkenness is a major problem of fallen mankind (cf. Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; Isa. 28:1, 7). It is often used as a metaphor for God's judgment.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM

▣

NASB, NKJV	**"scoffers"**
NRSV	**"mockers"**
TEV	**-----**
NJB	**"people who laugh at him"**
REB	**"arrogant men"**
JPSOA	**"traitors"**
LXX	**"pestilent persons"**
Peshitta	**"wicked men"**

This term in this stem (BDB 539, KB 529, *Polel* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is found only here. The *Hithpolel* stem is found in Isa. 28:22 translated as "scoffers." It can mean "rebel" (i.e., plan a takeover with rebels) or from another root, "mock" (i.e., receive counsel from drunken courtiers).

7:6 "plotting" This term (BDB 70) refers to an ambush (cf. Jer. 9:8, the VERB form in Jer. 51:12; see NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 490). This is the premeditated murder that Exod. 20:13 and Deut. 5:17 restrict!

▣

NASB, NRSV, TEV, NET, Peshitta "their anger"

NKJV, JPSOA	**"their baker"**
NJB, REB	**"their passion"**

The MT has "baker" (BDB 66, KB 78, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. The UBS Text Project, p. 240, gives it a "B" rating (some doubt). It says "Hosea alludes to particular historical events of his time which can no longer be identified. The 'baker' must refer to the leader of the plots." (note "baker" in v. 4).

Howeve, JPSOA footnote suggests an emendation to "rage."

1. אפהם – their baker, cf. Lev. 2:4
2. אפהם – their anger

7:7 "All their kings have fallen" See note at Hos. 7:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 7:8-16

8Ephraim mixes himself with the nations;
Ephraim has become a cake not turned.
9Strangers devour his strength,
Yet he does not know *it*;
Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him,
Yet he does not know *it*.
10Though the pride of Israel testifies against him,
Yet they have not returned to the LORD their God,
Nor have they sought Him, for all this.
11So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense;
They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.
12When they go, I will spread My net over them;
I will bring them down like the birds of the sky.
I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly.
13Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me!
Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me!
I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me.
14And they do not cry to Me from their heart
When they wail on their beds;
For the sake of grain and new wine they assemble themselves,
They turn away from Me.
15Although I trained *and* strengthened their arms,
Yet they devise evil against Me.
16They turn, *but* not upward,
They are like a deceitful bow;
Their princes will fall by the sword
Because of the insolence of their tongue.
This *will be* their derision in the land of Egypt.

7:8 "Ephraim mixes himself with the nations" This refers to Israel's foreign alliances with both Assyria and Egypt (cf. Hos. 7:11,16). The VERB "mixes" has a sacrificial connotation (BDB 117, KB 134, *Hithpolel*, IMPERFECT, e.g., Exod. 29:2, 40; Lev. 2:4; 7:10).

Foreign alliances involved invoking the names of their gods. Israel turned to foreign gods for help instead of YHWH (cf. Hos. 7:13-15).

▣ **"Ephraim has become a cake not turned"** This is a baking metaphor (cf. Hos. 7:4,6,7) to describe a cake that is burned on one side and raw on the other. This seems to apply to the uselessness of these covenant people of God. For a good discussion of ancient baking and ovens see *Bible Background Commentary, OT*, p. 756 or any Bible dictionary or encyclopedia. I also recommend the Zondervan *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (5 vols.) for this kind of cultural and historical information.

7:9 This seems to refer to the heavy tribute demanded by Assyria. Again Israel's ignorance is emphasized ("know" BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT, twice, cf. Hos. 4:1).

▣

NASB, NRSV	**"Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him"**
NKJV	**"gray hairs are here and there on him"**
TEV	**"Their days are numbered"**
NJB	**"even his hair is turning grey"**
REB	**"grey hairs may come on him"**
JPSOA	**"mold is scattered on him"**
LXX	**"sprouted on him"**

This is imagery of declining strength and imminent death!

7:10 "the pride of Israel testifies against him" This implies that because of Israel's knowledge of YHWH through revelation (i.e., Moses and the prophets), they are more guilty for following after fertility gods and covenant acts of violence (cf. Luke 12:48, knowledge brings responsibility).

Israel had come to the place that she thought her military strength made her stable (cf. Hos. 5:5), but her idolatry had brought spiritual apostasy and weakness.

▣ **"they had not returned to the LORD their God"** YHWH's heart breaks that His own people do not come to Him (cf. Hos. 7:7d).

The two VERBS in parallel in v. 7 (#1 "return" BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT and "sought" BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* PERFECT) imply a turning from (repentance) and a seeking after (faith, cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). Biblical faith is always a turning from and a turning to!

7:11 This verse shows the folly of hoping in political alliances instead of YHWH (cf. Hos. 7:16; 8:9-10, 13; 9:3, 6; 11:11; 12:1). The NIV Study Bible has an interesting note, "Menahem turned to Assyria (2 Kgs. 15:19-20) and Pekah to Egypt. Hosea alternated in allegiance to both (2 Kgs. 17:4)" (p. 1330).

SPECIAL TOPIC: KINGS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

7:12 "When they go, I will spread My net over them" This implies YHWH's control of foreign empires. He, not Assyria nor Egypt, controls Israel's destiny.

▣ **"I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation of their assembly"** This could refer to

1. Jeroboam I's declaration which set up the gold calves
2. subsequent kings of Israel who disobeyed Him
3. the council of these kings who agreed to this (foolishness of Israel's leaders)

The LXX changes "assembly" to "rumor of their *coming* affliction."

7:13-15 "strayed from Me. . .rebelled against Me. . .speak lies against Me. . .do not cry to Me from their heart. . .turn away from Me. . .devise evil against Me" Notice the personal elements ("Me" used 6 times) of the rebellion against God by His people.

The first three VERBS are *Qal* PERFECTS, which show a settled condition; the last two are IMPERFECTS, which show repeated, ongoing rebellion.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW GRAMMAR

7:13 "redeem" This VERB (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means "to buy back" or "to purchase." It has a wide use in the OT:

1. it is similar to the term *go'el,* but lacks the kinship emphasis
2. it is used primarily as deliverance from bondage, both physical and spiritual
3. examples: Exod. 13:13, 15; 20:30; 21:8; Ps. 34:22; 49:7, 8, 15; 130:7, 8; Isa. 1:27; and 29:22

SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

▣ **"but they speak lies against Me"** This may refer to

1. attributing to Ba'al the benefits of YHWH
2. so mixing Ba'al worship with YHWH that no one could know and find YHWH
3. falsehoods about God's character, (e.g., Hos. 6:1-3) characterization
4. promising prosperity and deliverance

7:14 The first line of Hos. 7:14 parallels the pain of YHWH as in Hos. 7:7. Many of the words and phrases that follow can be understood against the background of Ba'al worship:

1. "wail," ritual mourning for the death of Ba'al
2. "beds," may refer to the sexual activity at the Ba'al shrines (cf. Isa. 57:7)
3. "new wine," seen as a gift from the fertility gods (Ba'al and Asherah/Astarte)
4. "assemble" (*grr* BDB 657), following the Septuagint (cf. REV, NEB, JB) may be "gash" (*gdd* BDB 151), which also refers to cultic acts (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:28; Jer. 16:6) of Ba'al worship

See David Allan Hubbard, Hosea (Tyndale OT Commentaries), p. 141.

▣

NASB, NKJV	**"assemble"**
NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB, LXX	**"gash"**
JPSOA	**"debauch"**
Peshitta	**"quarrel"**

The meaning of the Hebrew VERB (BDB 157, KB 184, *Hithpolel* IMPERFECT) is uncertain. Several translations see this as

1. assembling (lit. "sojourn") for the purpose of evil (cf. ASV, NASB, RSV, and KJV)
2. alternate meaning using BDB 151, "to gather in bands"
3. another possible translation based on an emendation is the root (BDB 151) "gash" or "attack" (LXX, NRSV, NJB, REB). It is an expression that is used of Ba'al worship (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:28; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 42:5; 48:37) and is forbidden by the law of Moses (cf. Deut. 14:1 and Lev. 19:28; 21:5).
4. the Peshitta has "quarrel"

The MT has the VERB "sojourn" (BDB 157, KB 184, *Hithpolel* IMPERFECT). The UBS Text Project, p. 242, suggests "gash," but with a "C" rating (considerable doubt).

1. sojourn – יתגוררו
2. gash – יתגודדו

This is the "r" – "d" confusion so common in Hebrew copies.

▣

NASB, REB	**"They turn away from Me"**
NKJV, NRSV, Peshitta	**"they rebel against Me"**
TEV	**"what rebels they are"**
NJB	**"they are rebelling against me"**
JPSOA	**"they are faithless to Me"**

The MT has the VERB (BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* IMPERFECT) which means "to turn aside." This is imagery from getting off the clearly revealed path God has given (the way, the road). Any deviation from YHWH's revealed will is sin.

BDB suggests that there may be another Hebrew root (BDB 710, KB 770) which means "stubborn" or "rebellious" (Peshitta, NRSV, JPSOA footnote),

7:15 "I trained and strengthened their arms" Here is the metaphor of God as (1) a loving parent (cf. Hos. 11:1-4) or (2) one who prepared Israel for battle by teaching them to trust in Him (i.e., Holy War).

▣

NASB	**"They turn *but* not upward"**
NKJV, NIV	**"They return, *but* not to the Most High"**
NRSV	**"They turn to that which does not profit"**
TEV	**"They keep on turning away from Me"**
NJB, LXX	**"They turn to what does not exist"**
JPSOA	**"They come back; They have been of no use"**
Peshitta	**"They perverted themsleves for nothing "**

The MT is uncertain but an emendation yields "they turn to Ba'al," which makes sense in this context. In a book like Hosea, with so many textual issues, context is the key to a proper understanding of the poetic strophes.

▣ **"They are like a deceitful bow"** This seems to refer to the concept of "missing the mark," which is one of the Hebrew expressions for "sin." Here the war weapon is undependable.

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